

What Are the Most Common Complaints Received?

The analysis below pertains to 600+ letters received by the Condominium Information Center between July 2009 and the end of December 2010. The percentages go beyond 100% because over 75% of writers have more than one complaint.

1. 50% mention **lack of communication from boards of directors/managers**. This includes lack of information about what is going on in the condo, especially about finances and expenditures; reasons for fee hikes and special assessments; about boards' refusal to answer questions at AGMs; lack of information about board meetings or about anything of substance. It also includes inability of owners to contact boards (often in collusion with managers); refusal by boards/managers to provide information requested. Boards' and managers' refusal to allow owners access to documents when requested is mentioned by 25% of these same writers.

In these letters about boards and managers who do not communicate with owners and withhold information, other problems also come to light. In other words, lack of communication (or truthful communication) is generally a red flag for other problems in a condo. These same boards are also the ones who threaten owners who complain. Who have recourse to legal letters against owners. Who do not attend to noise problems. Or who waste condo monies. It is also in these same condos that conflicts of interest occur.

2. 38% of letters focused on **financial issues** as their first concern. These include unwarranted expenditures; waste of condo moneys; fees going up too quickly; special assessments not explained; tendering process either not carried out or rigged in favour of particular contractors; staff not doing their job so that outside contractors have to be hired, which increases expenditures uselessly; unnecessary work done by contractors; useless recourse to lawyers; fraud.

3. Nearly 30% of letters were about **repairs/maintenance** that are not being carried out. These are mainly delays (often months and even years) or refusals to attend to water penetration problems in units; mould in fan coils and other places; broken windows/doors; pool areas that are unsanitary; lights not replaced; failure of staff to take care of garbage, recycling, and green bins; odours; general lack of cleanliness; hedges or grass not cut; flowers not planted in a timely fashion.

4. Nearly 25% **of owners who write about problems** are also writing about the fact that they end up **intimidated, bullied, mistreated, discriminated against, or threatened by boards/managers**. Many receive accusatory letters telling them to stop their "harassment" and numerous others receive unwarranted letters from the condo's lawyer and often have to pay for these letters..

5. Surprisingly, 14% of letters were about **condo lawyers** standing by dysfunctional and/or dishonest boards and managers against owners. This also occurs during AGMs: Failing to do anything when there are fraudulent proxies gathered by managers and/or boards; preventing owners from asking questions; humiliating and even threatening owners who make comments/suggestions. Some of the writers mentioned unwarranted legal letters, abuse of liens, and even powers of sale.

6. **Noise** issues accounted for 10% of letters. This includes noise from other units, faulty ventilation system, the pumps, various other equipment, elevators, party room, and shared facilities. Owners' complaints are not attended. However, it should be noted that the pages on noise issues are some of the most frequently consulted pages in this website. Thus, noise problems are far more common than seen in the letters herein: Perhaps owners find solutions in the website: Some write that this noise has been ongoing for well over a year...even two to nine years!

Some owners cannot sleep and suffer from depression as a result; others have seen their blood pressure go up; others have had to take a leave of absence from work or gone on disability for a while. Yet, nothing is done. It is shocking that this is allowed to go on because it is scientifically proven that noise constitutes a health hazard.

7. Another 4% of complaints were about difficult/lazy superintendents, dishonest security/concierge personnel, issues of safety/security, including thefts in suites and unwarranted entry in suites, pets, and parking.

8. Surprisingly, only 4% of all letters merely asked a brief question that is not related to a concern/problem. Questions such as, "Where do I find the declaration?" "What is a status certificate?" or "Do I need to attend the AGM?" and "What does a board do?"

Many people did not want their letter posted because they were afraid that they will be unfairly treated if recognized by management and boards. Their fears are too often justified: In fact, the word "threatening" recurs in letters. This is a big problem. The larger implication is this: It can be costly for condo owners to seek justice, especially in a public way—and, yet, Canadians are supposed to be protected by various *Condo Acts*.